

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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11

ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

SAM-01 /081 W

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R 280620Z JUL 76

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4071

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0595

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT ET

SUBJECT: UNCERTAINTY UNDER A FACADE OF NORMALITY

1. THE CONTINUING ABSENCE OF COL. FIKRU, THE NEWLY-APPOINTED CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR OF ERITREA, IS GIVING RISE TO VARIOUS STREET RUMORS. AS FIKRU IS YET TO ARRIVE IN ASMARA TO ASSUME HIS DUTIES, ONE RUMOR HOLDS THAT HE HAS BEEN ASSASSINATED IN ADDIS BY POLITICAL OPPONENTS, WHILE A SECOND RUMOR HAS HIM FLEEING INTO THE COUNTRY-SIDE FOLLOWING THE EXECUTION OF THE OFFICERS OF THE 26TH BN. IN ASSAB. NO ONE PLACES MUCH CREDENCE IN THESE REPORTS, AND THE LOCAL BRANCH OF MOFA INSISTS THAT WHILE IT HAS NO FIRM DATE FOR HIS ARRIVAL, IT WILL INFORM THE CONGEN IMMEDIATELY SO THAT I MIGHT CALL ON HIM.

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2. ASMARA APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY UNAFFECTED BY THE

INCIDENT FOMENTED BY THE CO OF THE 26TH BN. IN ASSAB EXCEPT THAT GASOLINE SALES WERE SUSPENDED ON JULY 26; SALE, HOWEVER, WAS RESUMED ON JULY 27. THERE WAS NO UNUSUAL MILITARY ACTIVITY AND COMMERCE WAS CONDUCTED NORMALLY. RADIO ASMARA, HOWEVER, REMAINS OFF THE AIR.

3. ON THE NIGHT OF JULY 23, INSURGENTS STOLE THE DAIRY CATTLE HERD BELONGING TO PROMINENT BUSINESSMAN AND AGRICULTURALIST DR. NASTASE. THE HERD OF JUST OVER 100 WAS TAKEN FROM NASTASE'S FARM WHICH IS LOCATED JUST NORTH OF THE AIRPORT SECURITY PERIMETER, EAST OF THE COMMANDO POLICE COMPOUND AND SOUTH OF THE HQ OF THE "FATHER FIGHTERS" BATTALION. THIS INCIDENT WAS ONE MORE RUSTLING IN A SERIES WHICH BEGAN IN THE ASMARA AREA ABOUT ONE YEAR AGO AND WHICH HAS SEVERELY DIMINISHED SUPPLIES OF DAIRY PRODUCTS FOR ASMARA.

4. ON THE MILITARY SIDE, IT IS REPORTED THAT SEVERAL OFFICERS OF THE AIRBORNE BN., WHICH IS CURRENTLY LOCATED IN ADI UGRI, HAVE BEEN DETAINED AT THE MILITARY CAMP AT THE FORMER EXPO SITE. REPORTS FILTERING INTO ASMARA INDICATE THAT THE HEAVY FIGHTING IN THE KEREN AREA WHICH PEAKED LAST WEEK HAS SUBSIDED, AND THAT THE OUT-POST AT HAGAZ HAS BEEN RELIEVED. THE TROOPS OF THE FLAME DIVISION WHICH WERE FERRIED BY AIR TO KEREN FROM ASMARA JULY 23 AND 24 HAVE NOT YET RETURNED TO ASMARA.

5. FOR ADDIS: THERE ARE REPORTS HERE, ALLEGEDLY CONFIRMED BY INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTS, THAT THE EPMG AMBASSADOR TO THE YEMEN ARAB REPUBLIC HAS GIVEN UP HIS POST BECAUSE OF HIS OBJECTIONS TO DIRG POLICIES. REQUEST COMMENT.
SLUTZ

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NNN

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